



Bernard C. "Jack" Young
Mayor

COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

Tom Liebel, Chairman



Chris Ryer
Director, Planning

STAFF REPORT - DRAFT

November 10, 2020

REQUEST: Concept review - Construct a five-story apartment building

ADDRESS: 3535 Clipper Road (Woodberry Historic District)

RECOMMENDATION: Concept approval with conditions:

1. Further reduce height by either removing at least one floor or stepping down a portion of the fifth floor to be more compatible with the surrounding 2 ½-story houses.
2. Return to commission to confirm final design and materials.

STAFF: Walter W. Gallas, AICP

APPLICANT: Gordon Godat, AIA, JP2 Architects

OWNER: 3535 CLIPPER, LLC

SITE/HISTORIC DISTRICT

The property is located within the Woodberry Historic District (*Image 1*). Situated immediately west of the Jones Falls, and abutting the northern boundary of Druid Hill Park, the Woodberry district preserves and adapts aspects of its industrial heritage and continues to maintain the physical integrity of the mill village and company town it once was. The street plan reflects its development over 175 years—irregular near the channel of the falls at its eastern edge, while more planned and grid-like in the northwest quadrant. Portions of the former Poole & Hunt Foundry and Machine Works have been adapted for commercial and residential uses incorporating new construction. The southern section of the former Poole & Hunt land has been filled in with a 21st century residential development of modernist design. In the southeast corner of the district, Brick Hill is its own tiny enclave of company-built workers' duplexes.

Site Conditions/Architectural Description: The site of the proposed new construction is on the east side of Clipper Road where Druid Park Drive intersects Clipper Road. A metal warehouse sits on the site (*Images 2 & 3*). The 1914-1915 Sanborn map shows the site at one time contained 3535-3537 Clipper Road (then Railroad Avenue), a 2 ½-story double house, one of four such stone houses on the east side of the street (*Images 4 & 5*), which was company-built housing for the mill workers. The four houses were constructed in the mid-19th century, and appear in the 1928 and the 1953 Sanborn maps as well (*Images 6 & 7*). Sometime in the latter 20th century, 3535-3537 Clipper Road was demolished, and the warehouse was constructed. The foundation of the warehouse appears to have incorporated stone of the demolished house (*Image 8*). On May 21, 2019, the two southernmost double stone houses at 3511-3513 and

3523-3525 Clipper Road were unexpectedly demolished, leaving the stone duplex at 3605-3607 Clipper Road as the sole surviving duplex of the original four on this block (*Image 9*). The warehouse is a non-contributing building in the district.

BACKGROUND

- July 13, 2020 – Development team has pre-development meeting with Eric Tiso, land use and urban design division, Planning Department
- July 27, 2020 – Woodberry designated as local historic district. Development team submits schematic to CHAP for initial comments.
- August 6, 2020 – As follow-up to previous week's phone conversation with applicant, CHAP staff shares sections of CHAP design guidelines which are applicable for staff's review of the proposal.
- August 10, 2020 - Applicant submits application for CHAP Authorization to Proceed along with design package for September 8, 2020, Commission hearing.
- August 12, 2020 – CHAP staff meets virtually with design team. Team members describe the design review process for 3511 Clipper Road, the planned companion to 3535 Clipper Road. 3511 Clipper Road was reviewed by the Urban Design and Architecture Advisory Panel (UDAAP) of the Planning Department, because the review began prior to the designation of Woodberry as a local historic district on July 27, 2020. CHAP staff, referencing CHAP design guidelines, recommends reducing the size of the building, taking another look at the materials, and considering the view of the building as it's approached on Druid Park Drive.
- August 19, 2020 – Applicant submits revised design package.
- August 21, 2020 – Applicant responds to CHAP staff request to ghost in buildings on existing street views in design package.
- September 3, 2020 – CHAP staff shares recommendations in draft staff report with applicant, in advance of September 8 Commission hearing. In report, staff recommends disapproval and recommends that the plans:
 - Reduce the building's height by at least one floor to more closely serve as a transition to the lower scale neighborhood around it;
 - Use design techniques and materials treatment that emphasize the horizontal in order to decrease the perceived height; and
 - Use materials such as rusticated stone at the first floor and a combination of masonry and metal panels at the upper floors as a nod to its historic context.
- September 4, 2020 – Applicant requests that application be withdrawn from September 8 Commission hearing agenda and requests copy of full draft staff report.
- September 8, 2020 – CHAP staff emails copy of draft staff report to team in anticipation of hearing the application at the October 13 Commission meeting.
- September 9, 2020 – Applicant states that team needs more time to review the comments in staff report and will reach out when ready for meeting.
- September 14, 2020 – Responding to team member's request, CHAP staff forwards letters (four total) submitted as public comment on the project from community members ahead of the anticipated September 8 hearing.
- September 16, 2020 – Responding to team member's request, CHAP staff forwards the Woodberry district designation hearing staff reports and hearing letters.

- Week of September 21, 2020 –Planning director meets with developer and Council President’s office.
- October 15, 2020 – Design team submits elevation studies for three façade modification options and height reduction of 7’-4” from the Clipper Road side. The revision also includes an added basement to take advantage of the existing grade that falls away on the east side of the site. CHAP staff shares options with architectural advisory committee of commissioners. Consensus is that design is moving in right direction to address recommendation for base, middle and top and for more emphasis on horizontality.
- October 20, 2020 – CHAP staff meets with design team to discuss design options provided to staff.
- October 30, 2020 – CHAP staff meets with design team to discuss revised proposal. Staff commends team on efforts to address recommendations 2 and 3 in September staff report, and urges further height reduction. This, staff says, could be achieved by reducing the number of units on the fifth floor, given that units were added to the plan by adding a new basement level.

PROPOSAL & APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES

The applicant is proposing the following scope of work: “Construction of a 5-story wood framed, multifamily residential building in the Woodberry neighborhood. The ground floor will have a leasing office, bike storage, shared amenity areas, restroom, and space for a café or similar small tenant. The building will include approximately 50 studio/efficiency units” (*Images 10-15*).

Staff applied the following sections* of the *Baltimore City Historic Preservation Design Guidelines* in reviewing this proposal:

2.1 Guiding Principles for New Design

2.2 Site Design

2.3 Scale and Form

2.1 Guiding Principles for New Design

- Avoid demolishing historic buildings, structures, and landscapes when designing new construction projects.
- Identify the character-defining features of the surrounding historic buildings and streetscape. Design new buildings to visually relate to the historic environment. Respect the established design precedent in the immediate area.
- Contemporary architectural design that reflects its current time, place, use, and culture is accepted, provided that the design is compatible with the character of the historic district.
- Radically contrasting building designs are discouraged within local historic districts.

* Staff also applied Chapter 5 Guidelines for Archeology and determined there was low potential for archeological resources at the site given the disturbance caused by the warehouse construction.

- New buildings that are similar to existing buildings in materials, form, massing, and architectural features are accepted as long as the new buildings can be distinguished from historic buildings.

Application of Guidelines

The proposed building will be on a site which hasn't had a historic structure on it for decades, so no historic fabric is being lost. The contemporary design doesn't pretend to be historic, and so certainly meets the spirit of the guiding principles. Yet the design challenge is how to visually relate a new building at this location to the surrounding historic buildings and streetscape. Another building for this development, 3511 Clipper Road, located immediately to the south received final design approval through the Planning Department's Urban Design and Architecture Advisory Panel (UDAAP) prior to the designation of the Woodberry historic district, and this proposed building is comparable to that UDAAP-approved design. It should be emphasized, though, that CHAP design guidelines speak to "historic" context. The context in this case is Clipper Road and Druid Park Drive. The building to the immediate north is a 2 ½ story stone house, the last remaining house of a row of four that originally lined this side of Clipper Road (*Image 16*). Farther south on the same side across the lots where the demolished stone houses stood, is the old company store/post office, a two-story masonry building (*Image 17*). Across the street and across a parking lot, is Shiloh Church along Druid Park Drive, an imposing stone building (*Image 18*). South of Druid Park Drive on the west side of Clipper Road are the rows of two-story stone houses built in the 1840s by the owners of the Woodberry Factory (*Image 19*). In response to the initial proposal, CHAP staff recommended that the applicant take another look at the materials, suggesting the use of rusticated stone at the first floor and a combination of masonry and metal panels at the upper floors as a nod to the building's historic context. Staff also observed that the design should make a greater effort to fit into the landscape. This rendition comes closer to meeting the CHAP design guidelines, with the use of a stone at the base along the Clipper Road façade, and brick at the base of the other sides, with metal and fiber cement panels at the upper floors.

An extra CHAP review challenge here is not only the context of what exists today, but also what new buildings might be added in the vicinity besides 3535 Clipper Road. Two new developments are planned in the immediate vicinity—and are at various stages of being finalized. The aforementioned 3511 Clipper Road, the proposed companion building directly south of this project is one. (The property at 3535 Clipper Road was not controlled by the current ownership team at that point and so was not reviewed at the same time as 3511 Clipper Road.) Currently, 3511 and 3535 Clipper Road are intended to be under the same management company though they will have different ownership teams, and the owners want the two buildings to be visually related. Another development, comprised of 3-story townhouses, is proposed on the higher elevation of the Poole & Hunt lot, to the rear of the stone houses on the west side of Clipper Road. Should all of these be developed as planned, the historic character of this portion of the district will be significantly impacted.

2.2 Site Design

- Retain established property line patterns, street and alley widths, setbacks, primary and secondary building orientation, and landscape elements.

- Incorporate character-defining site design features of the historic district into the designs of new construction projects.
- In areas with varied setbacks, the setback for new construction should be within ten percent (10%) of those of neighboring buildings. Variations to these setback guidelines may be warranted in some cases, but decisions should be carefully considered with respect to their impact on the overall streetscape.
- The spaces between buildings help define the historic character of the neighborhood. Design new construction to follow the existing pattern of building widths and spacing between buildings.
- Primary buildings should have a similar orientation and relationship to the street as the existing buildings. Primary entrances and facades should be located, oriented, and sequenced to be consistent with the pattern of entrances and facades in the neighborhood.
- New construction projects should reinforce existing patterns of open space and enclosure created by existing vehicular and pedestrian circulation routes, fences, walls, yards, courtyards, gardens, and landscaping.
- New construction at corners or abutting public spaces require special consideration in the design of entrances and multiple, publicly visible facades.

Application of Guidelines

CHAP staff recognizes that many of the guidelines for site design simply aren't applicable for this project, given the type of building proposed and the constraints of the site. A few of them, however, are relevant. To fit the program, the building fills the site. For context, the two remaining buildings along the east side of Clipper Road have little or no setbacks at the front of each lot, with some side and rear yards. The houses along the west side are set back from the street somewhat, but not a great deal, so the building's siting along the street meets the setback guideline (*Image 20*). The proposed 5-story building would sit about 30 feet from the 2 ½- story stone house at 3605-3607 Clipper Road, a recently completed rehabilitation for single family use (*Image 21*). The design places the building entrance facing Clipper Road, which meets the guideline regarding the relationship to the street. The building has four exposed elevations, and the design will be seen from many vantage points, not just from up and down Clipper Road, but from Druid Park Drive, from Union Street looking up at the building from across the light rail tracks, from the 41st Street viaduct, and from Interstate 83. This impact on the larger viewshed means that the building's compatibility with the surrounding historic context is critical (*Image 22*). The design meets aspects of these guidelines, namely maintaining the general setback from the street.

2.3 Scale and Form

- The scale and form of new buildings must be compatible with the height and depth of surrounding buildings. Where there is variation of building height within the immediate neighborhood, the new building should generally relate to the predominant pattern.
- New buildings must complement the massing of surrounding buildings, including the proportion of solid surfaces (walls) to voids (window and door openings). Respect the characteristic rhythm (fenestration, bays, rooflines, etc.) of existing buildings.

- Design the new building to be proportional to surrounding buildings. Consider important building proportions such as floor-to-floor heights, the size and placement of windows and doors, the scale of articulated elements such as porches, overhanging cornices, and bay windows.
- Floor-to-floor heights in new construction should be within ten percent (10%) of the floor-to-floor heights of adjacent historic buildings.
- Design rooflines to be compatible with those found on surrounding buildings.

Application of Guidelines

The design challenge with this project is how to insert a building with this program into a setting containing modest buildings that have stood there for over 175 years. Granted, the Woodberry district contains examples of massive historic structures from its industrial past, and they have been effectively adapted to contemporary uses. The district also contains numerous examples of modern design. But this is not Clipper Park Road or Union Street, where those large industrial and modern buildings are the overarching physical context. This context is different. Clipper Road rises in elevation as one travels north. With its lower floor-to-floor heights, 3535 Clipper Road is about the height of the proposed 3511 Clipper Road even given its situation at a higher point along the street. When compared to the stone houses on the west side of Clipper Road, the proposed building (at 51'-4" to the roof) is 15'-8" taller, according to the applicant's information. It is nearly 30 feet taller than its northern neighbor at 3605-3607 Clipper Road. The applicants point to the height of Shiloh Church as context. The church is about 138 feet to the west across a parking lot and on an even higher elevation than 3535 Clipper Road. From a historic context standpoint, the proposed building shouldn't strive to approach the height of the church; it should be subservient to it (*Images 23-25*).

The applicants responded to CHAP staff's recommendation to reduce the height. Their revised submission shows a height reduction of 7'-4". This is achieved by removing the transformer at the ground level to enable setting all floor-to-floor heights at 10'-2", and pulling back the roof edge at the Clipper Road side. Even with these alterations, the proposal does not meet the guidelines for height and scale. CHAP staff's recommendation was that the height be reduced by at least one floor.

Staff suggested that the team take design cues for treatment of the elevations from the old Poole & Hunt office building (1905), located at the northwest corner of Clipper Road and Clipper Park Road. The building is three floors of masonry atop a rusticated stone base topped by a hipped roof and cupola. The three-part articulation of the elevations—base, middle and eaves—was suggested for the elevations of 3535 Clipper Road. The tall floor-to-floor height of the former Poole & Hunt office building results in a substantial mass that nevertheless acts as a transitional building between the large-scale industrial buildings along Clipper Park Road and small-scale residential houses on Clipper Road (*Images 26-28*). The design team responded by creating a base, middle and top through material transitions and cornices and/or banding to emphasize the horizontal, applying this on all four facades. In addition, the roof edge along Clipper Road is pushed back approximately 5' to lower the perceived height as seen from street level on that road (*Image 29*). While the design was modified, it's difficult to see it as a transitional piece of architecture

between the industrial buildings along the Jones Falls to the east and the residential neighborhood to the west.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS

Residents of the Woodberry neighborhood have received copies of the plans and staff anticipates comments, which will be provided to the Commission.

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

The applicant is proposing a five-story 50-plus unit apartment building along Clipper Road. When paired with a similar building proposed immediately adjacent to the south, the result will alter the character of this street. CHAP staff recognizes that the TOD-2 zoning for the parcel allows a maximum height limit of 60 feet. CHAP staff also recognizes its role and responsibility to review new construction with an eye to its impacts upon the historic district into which the construction will be introduced. Reviewing the initial application in relation to the *Baltimore City Historic Preservation Design Guidelines*, CHAP staff found that the application could more effectively relate to the immediate historic context by reducing its height by at least one floor. While a height reduction of 7'-4" was achieved, the building is still a 5-story building along Clipper Road in an immediate neighborhood of mostly 2 ½-story houses. The facades of the building were modified in response to staff's recommendation to create a clear base, middle and top, and to emphasize the horizontal. The materials were adjusted to address staff's recommendation to take the historic context into consideration. These alterations have brought the proposal closer to meeting the CHAP guidelines, but staff finds that the overall height is an outstanding design issue.

RECOMMENDATION

CHAP staff recommends concept approval with conditions:

- 1. Further reduce height by either removing at least one floor or stepping down a portion of the fifth floor to be more compatible with the surrounding 2 ½-story houses.**
- 2. Return to commission to confirm final design and materials.**



Eric Holcomb
Director

MAP AND IMAGES

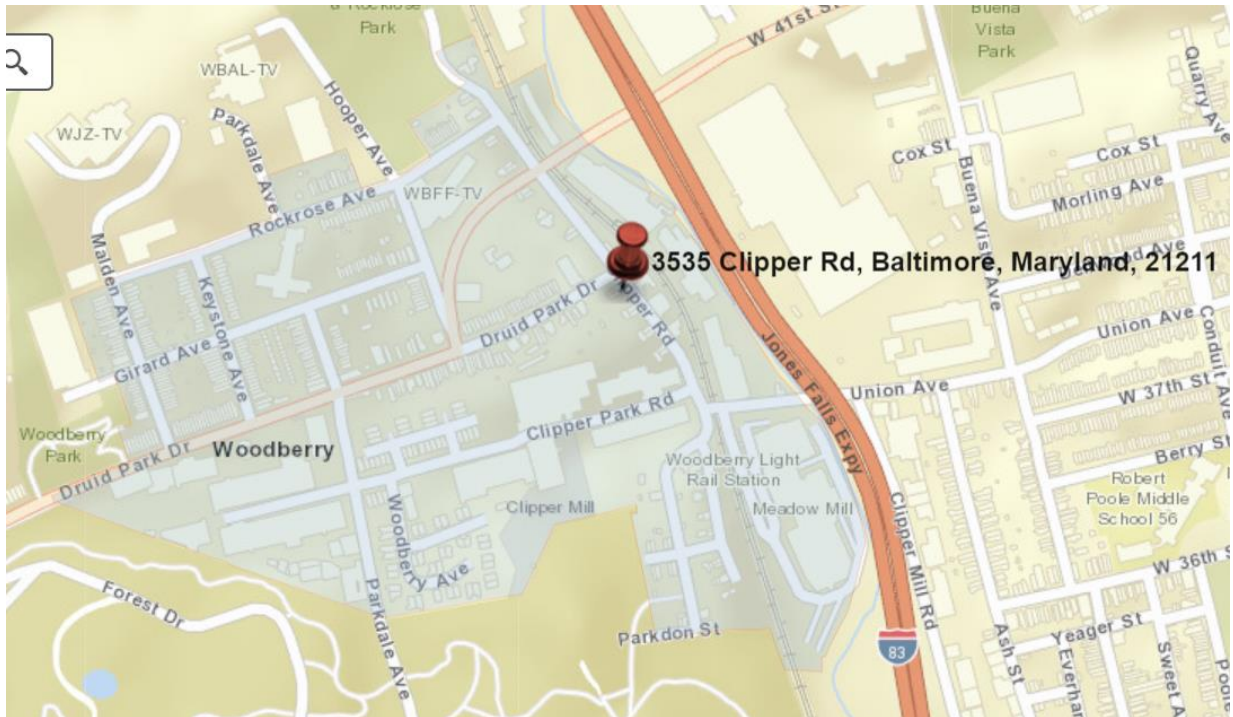


Image 1– 3535 Clipper Road in the Woodberry Historic District (blue shaded area)



Image 2: 3535 Clipper Road site – Aerial view from south, December 8, 2019



Image 3: 3535 Clipper Road site – Aerial view from southeast, December 8, 2019

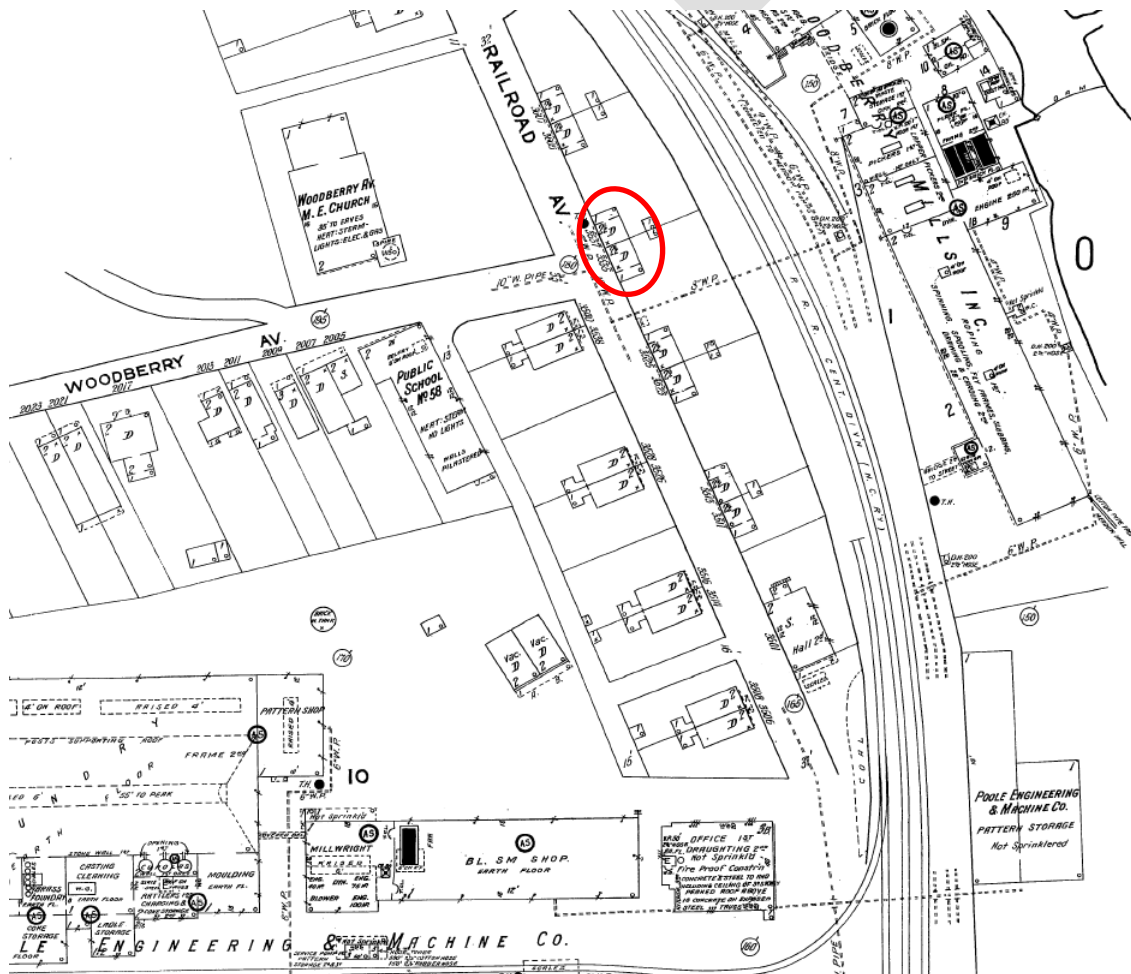


Image 4: 3535 Clipper Road (Railroad Avenue), 1914-1915 Sanborn Map

3535 Clipper Road (Woodberry Historic District) — Concept review - Construct a five-story apartment building

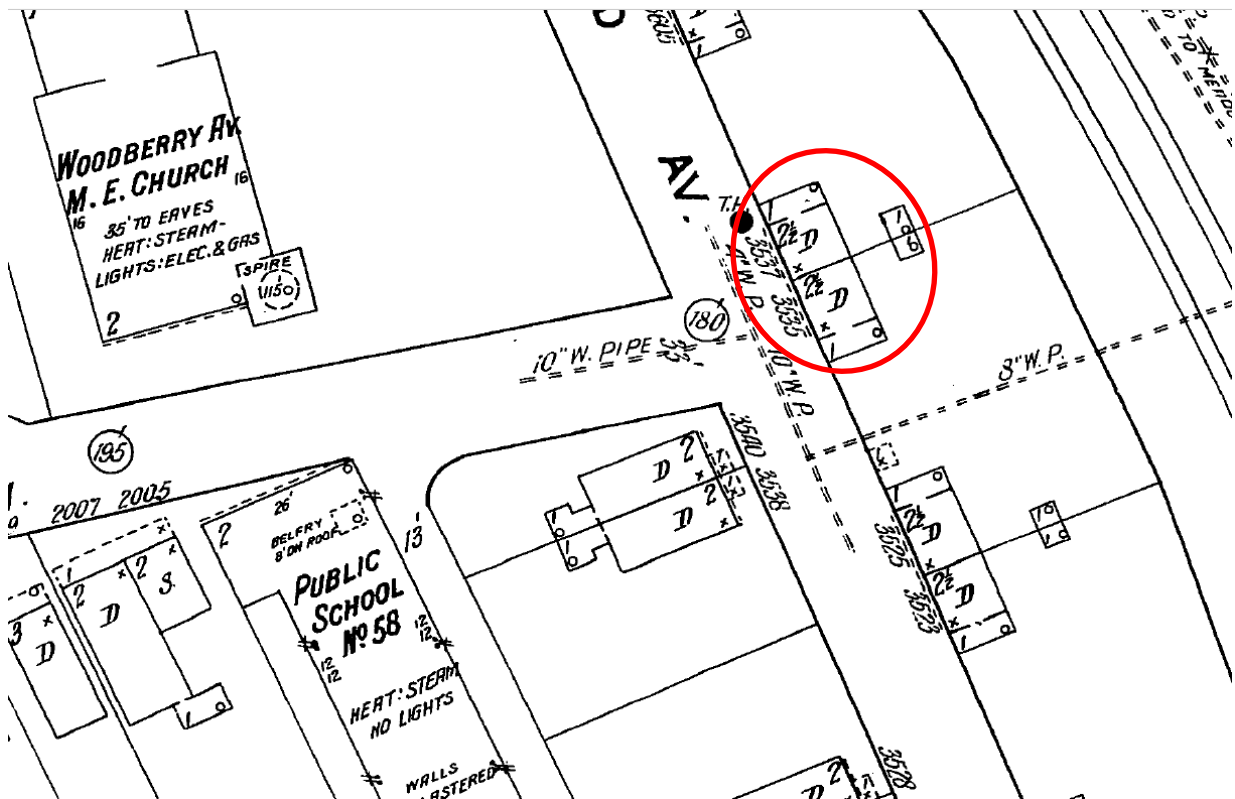


Image 5: 3535 Clipper Road (Railroad Avenue), 1914-1915 Sanborn Map, detail

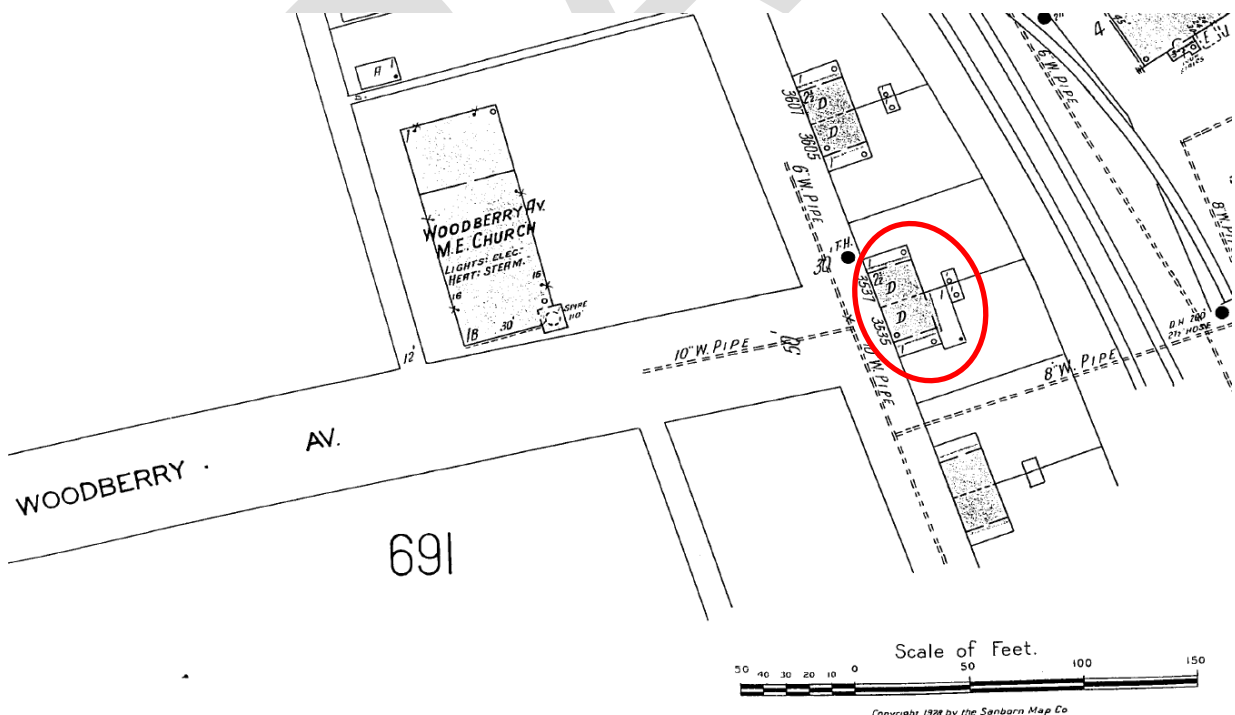


Image 6: 3535 Clipper Road (Railroad Avenue), 1928 Sanborn Map, detail

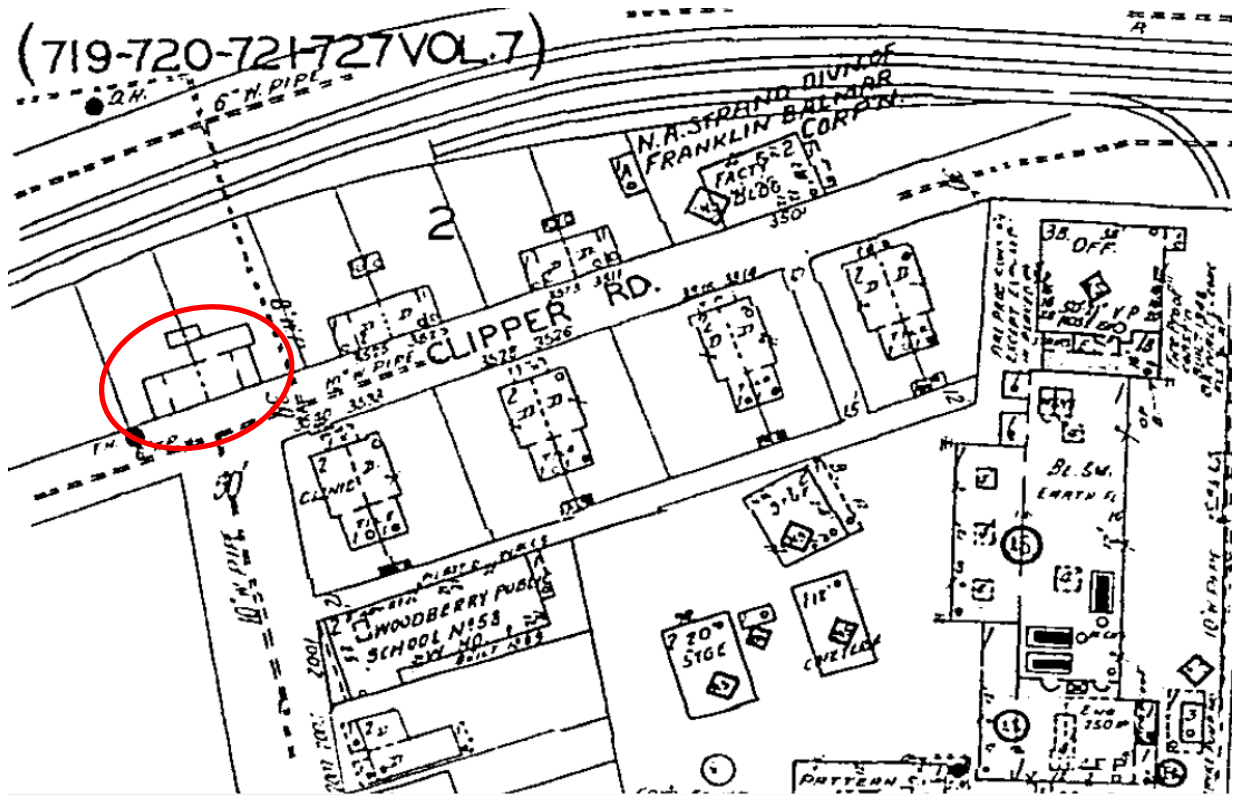


Image 7: 3535 Clipper Road, 1953 Sanborn Map, detail



Image 8: 3535 Clipper Road, October 6, 2019



Image 9: 3605-3607 Clipper Road (stone house) and 3535 Clipper Road (right), August 27, 2020



Image 10: 3535 Clipper Road with 3511 Clipper Road, west elevations



Image 11: 3535 Clipper Road, proposed west elevation



Image 12: 3535 Clipper Road and 3511 Clipper Road, east elevations



Image 13: 3535 Clipper Road, proposed east elevation



Image 14: 3535 Clipper Road, proposed south elevation



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Image 15: 3535 Clipper Road, proposed north elevation



Image 16: 3506-3507 Clipper Road looking south, with 3535 Clipper Road at arrow



Image 17: 1700 Union Avenue (center) looking north with 3535 Clipper Road at arrow, October 6, 2019



Image 18: Druid Park Drive looking west from Clipper Road, Shiloh Church, right, August 27, 2020



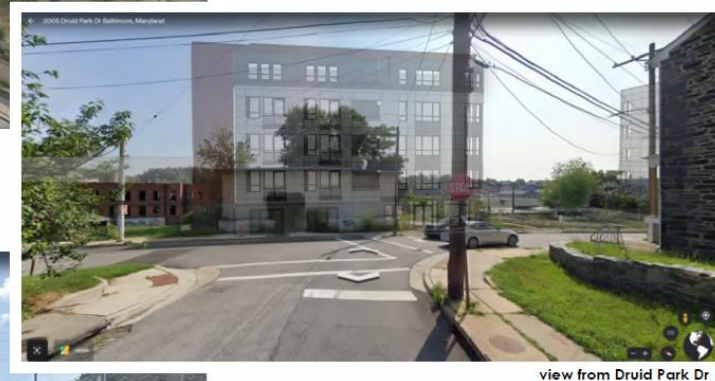
Image 19: 3535 Clipper Road, left, looking south, August 27, 2020



view from south on Clipper Rd



view from north on Clipper Rd



view from Druid Park Dr

Existing site w/ Proposed Building

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Image 20: 3535 Clipper Road, proposed plan superimposed over existing streetscape

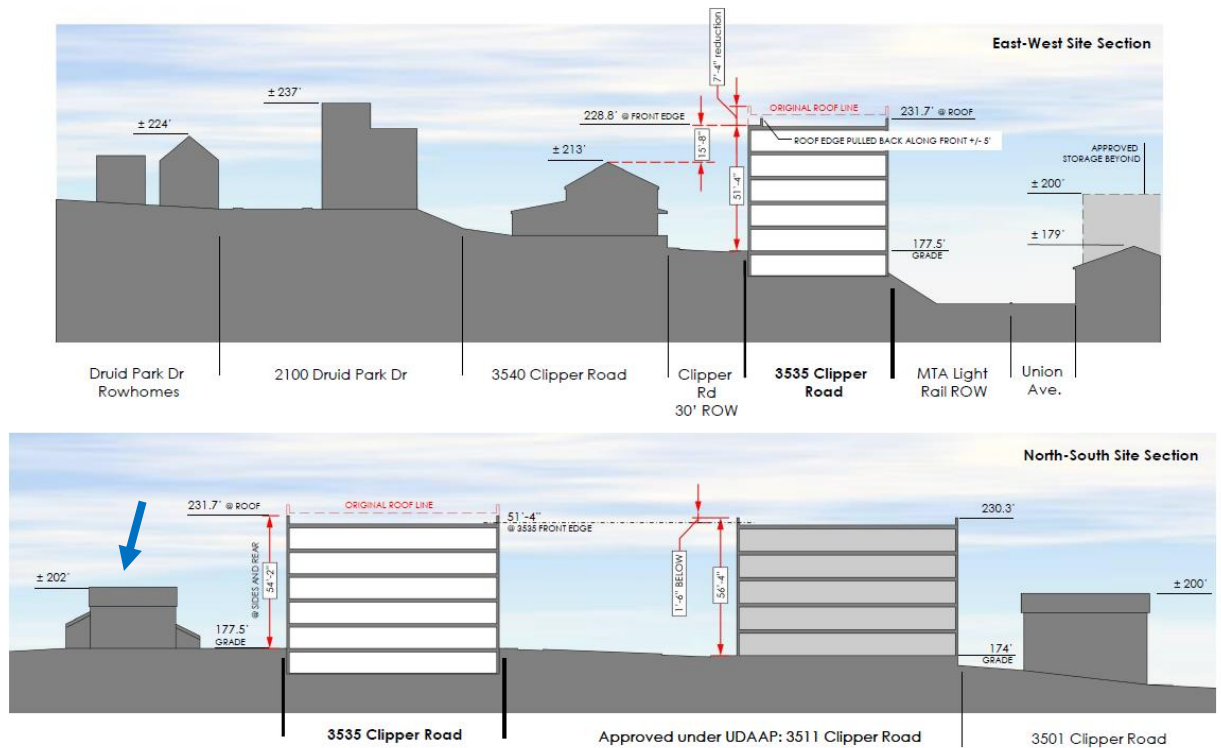


Image 21: East-West and North-South Site Sections, 3605-3607 Clipper Road at blue arrow

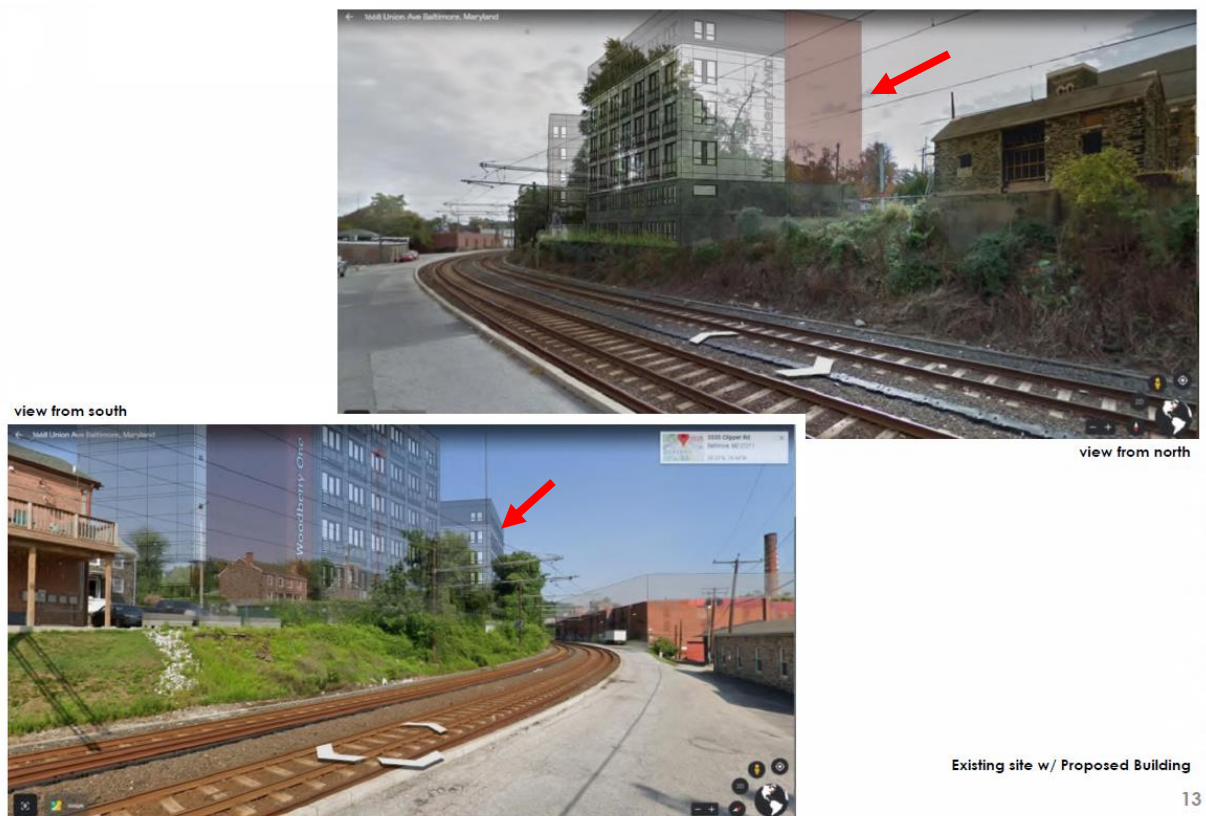


Image 22: 3511 and 3535 Clipper Road (arrow) superimposed over existing streetscapes



Context View – Looking North West on Clipper Road

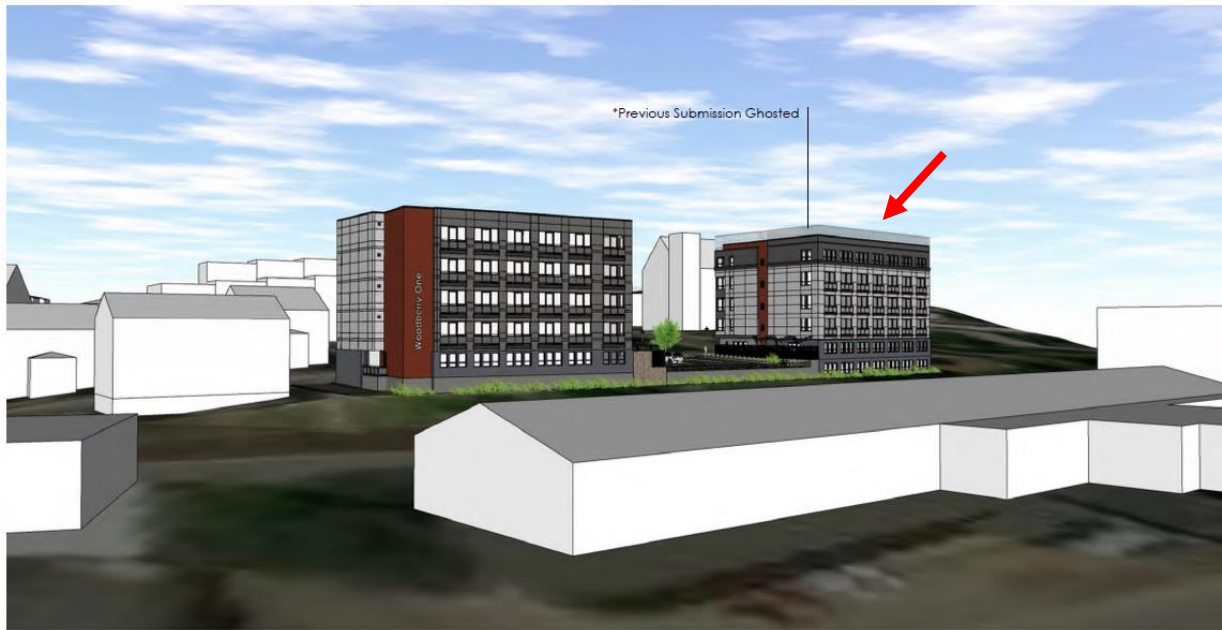
Image 23: Context View – Looking North West on Clipper Road, 3535 Clipper Road at arrow

*Previous Submission Ghosted



Massing Context - View 1

Image 24: Massing context – View 1, looking north, 3535 Clipper Road at center



Massing Context - View 3

Image 25: Massing Context – View 3, looking west, 3535 Clipper Road at arrow



Image 26: Poole & Hunt office building (1905), left, 3535 Clipper Road at arrow, August 27, 2020



Image 27: Poole & Hunt office building east elevation, August 27, 2020



Image 28: Left to right- Millrace condominiums, Poole & Hunt office building, 3506-3508 Clipper Road, August 27, 2020

CHAP STAFF RECOMMENDATION #2: Use design techniques and materials treatment that emphasize the horizontal in order to decrease the perceived height.

DESIGN RESPONSE: A base, middle, and top has been created through material transitions and cornices and/or banding, to emphasize the horizontal. This concept is applied on all 4 facades.

The parapet along Clipper Road is pushed back approximately 5' to lower the perceived height even further of the building from street level.



View from eyelevel across Clipper Road

Image 29: Design modifications to original plan in response to staff recommendations